

THE RIPLEY ADVERTISER.

VOL. 35.

RIPLEY, MISS., SATURDAY, MARCH 5, 1881.

NO. 40.

Written for "The Ripley Advertiser."

The White Rose

—or—

MEMPHIS.

BY W. C. FALKNER.

CHAPTER XXV.

Ivanhoe and Miss Darlington (nick-named Scottie) were as usual engaged in an earnest conversation, the topic being a mixture of sentiment and gossip.

"Now, Sir Knight," observed Miss Darlington as she led him to a seat, "if you feel inclined to engage in a game of gossip on the old thread-bare topic, we will stop here where we will be free from spies or intruders. The fact of the business is, I believe that another day of such intolerable suspense, will unsettle my mind."

"Perhaps I can furnish you a little scrap of information, that will afford temporary relief, enough to keep your thoughts employed until something more definite transpires."

"Tell it then without preliminaries."

"Have you noticed a little, pale-faced lad, gliding about like a half-grown ghost?"

"Indeed I have; and there is a peculiar, strange wildness in the expression of his countenance that attracted my attention; but what about him?"

"He is the black domino's courier, spy, agent, pilot, general superintendent, or something of that sort."

"By the by, I see that same little ghostly lad yonder leaning over the banisters, just beyond the pilot house."

"Yes, that is him; I happen to know that he is serving the lady in the black domino in some of her mysterious schemes. Knowing as I did how much it would relieve you to obtain any clue that would unravel the unpleasant mystery by which we were surrounded, I took the liberty to play the spy myself. I have been guilty of a mean thing, (and to be candid I think I have,) you will have to answer for the sin of it, for I was prompted to it by my anxiety to gratify the curiosity of some one who was very dear to me."

"Indeed I am very grateful to you for the kindness, but pray tell me what you have discovered?"

"I heard a conversation between the little pale-faced boy and the lady in the black domino."

"Well what did it amount to?"

"The lad pointed towards Napoleon, and said, 'there is your man.'"

"How do you know that is him?"

"I have seen him under the bed in his state room!" replied the little fellow, "I can assure you, madam, beyond all question he is the very man you are after."

"What is the number of his state room?" enquired the black domino. Then the boy made an answer which I did not distinctly hear, as they both began to converse in a low hurried tone. There is a stack of mattresses on the larboard side, and I was leaning against it, and they were on the other side. After a long whispered conversation, they began to talk a little louder, and then I heard the boy say, 'I have found out all you wish to know about Napoleon, and you had better act promptly.'"

"No, not yet," replied the black domino, "my plans are not ripe yet; but you must keep your eye on him until I am ready."

"You may depend on me to do that," replied the lad, "he shall never leave this boat without your consent."

"You are a splendid detective, and shall be abundantly rewarded for your faithful services."

"I have already been rewarded," said the boy, "ten times more than I deserve. I would do anything to please you."

"I thank my little friend, and mean to show my gratitude in a tangible shape one of these days. I am going to purchase a nice cottage for your mother, if I ever get enough money."

"You are too kind, Miss; you have done more for me than I deserve; but I will serve you as long as I live. I hope you will succeed in bringing that bad man to punishment for his wicked crimes."

"They then went away and I heard nothing more."

"Then it seems she is shadowing Napoleon?"

"Yes, that is certain."

"What does it all mean?"

"Add that is the question I should like to have explained."

"Have you ever mentioned the subject to the little boy?"

"No."

"Call him here and let us endeavor to pump the secret out of him."

"Come here a moment little man, if you please."

"The lad promptly approached and fixed his large restless eyes on Ivanhoe with a look of enquiry."

"What is your name, my little friend?" enquired Ivanhoe.

"Spratt, sir," was the prompt reply.

"Where do you reside?"

"I have no home at present sir."

"Did you get aboard of this boat at Memphis?"

"No, sir."

"Where did you get on at?"

"At Friars Point, sir."

"Where are you going to get off at?"

"I do not know where I shall stop at—that depends on circumstances."

"What circumstances do you allude to?"

"If you will excuse me, sir, I had rather not tell that."

"Oh, certainly my little friend, you need not tell anything unless it suits you. Do you know the lady in the black domino?"

"Yes, sir."

"Would you object to tell me who she is?"

"I could not do it without her consent; I think she does not want her name known just now."

"I will give you this twenty dollar bill, if you will tell me her name."

"I beg you will excuse me, sir."

"I will give you a hundred dollars, if you will tell me who she is."

"I could not do it, sir, if you were to offer me a thousand dollars."

"Does she reside in Memphis?"

"No, sir."

"Where does she reside then?"

"I had rather not tell you that, sir."

"Do you know the man who personates Napoleon?"

"Yes, sir."

"Will you tell me who he is?"

"That is also a secret which I am not at liberty to reveal."

"Can you tell me whether or not, he got on this boat at Memphis?"

"I could tell you, sir, but I must not talk about him. You will soon know all about it."

"What right had you to go into that gentleman's state room, and conceal yourself under his bed?"

"How did you know I did that, sir?"

"I heard you tell the lady in the black domino about it."

"I hope, sir, you did not play the eaves-dropper?"

"No, but you and the lady talked about the matter where I could not help hearing it."

"I hope, sir, that you will not say anything about what you heard, because if you do, you will be sorry for it when you know what caused me to go into his room."

"You have been watching Napoleon, by the lady's direction—is that not the way of it?"

"Since you have made the discovery, it is useless for me to deny it; but sir, I beg you to say nothing about it."

"How long do you want me to keep the secret?"

"But a very short time, sir. That man who represents the Emperor, is a very grand villain, and if you were to reveal what you know, it might upset all the plans we have been arranging to capture him."

"Why not capture him now?"

"The lady in the black domino, is waiting for something to happen, which I am not permitted to tell."

"Very well, my little friend, I promise you I will not reveal your secret."

"I am very much obliged to you, sir, and you shall know all about the matter very soon. I will go now, sir, if you have nothing more to say to me."

As the little fellow bowed politely and moved away, Scottie heaved a sigh and said:

"Heigh ho! was any body ever so inundated with mystery as we are?"

"If they were I should pity them."

"I must say that, that is a very polite, manly, little fellow; and that head of his is full of brains."

"Yes, and he has been playing a deep game, if I am not very much mistaken."

"What in heaven's name does it all mean?"

"I would give my bottom dollar, to be able to answer the question."

"Let us try and pump the secret out of Mr. Brazzleman—I dare say he knows all about it."

"I have been trying to get him to tell me who the lady is, but he positively refuses to do it—in fact, I do not believe he or the captain either knows who she is."

"Look yonder, will you, that mysterious woman has been watching us all the time. She is going to that boy to find out what we have been saying to him. I declare this is really provoking; and I am not willing to submit to it any longer."

"Can you suggest any plan to get rid of the nonsense?"

"Suppose we complain to Captain Guitman?"

"I should not like to do that, after making a promise to the lad to keep his secret."

"How would it do to cross examine Napoleon on the subject?"

"That would be the most imprudent step we could take, for it appears that the black domino has got him spotted. I think we ought to say nothing to anyone about what we know, until something more is developed."

"See yonder, she is leading that boy to her state room. mischief is brewing, and a culmination will be reached soon."

"Well, let matters jog along, and let us go down and dance a set; I hear the music."

"I have no objection—in fact I am glad you proposed it, as I think the dance will take my mind off of this unpleasant subject. I have often heard of people suffering with curiosity, but never till now did I know how one could be so much excited."

Ivanhoe then led Scottie down to the saloon, and soon was gliding round in a lively waltz with her fair cheek resting on his shoulder. George was looking supremely happy, as he waltzed with the queen of Shetla. A dozen other couples were enjoying themselves while keeping time to the splendid music.

"Come," said Ivanhoe, as soon as the waltz was ended, "let us go back on deck, as I have thought of something else to tell you."

"I hope you are not going to harp on the same string?"

"That is exactly what I am going to do; but I have something new to tell you. Just a moment before we began to waltz, George told me that the whole secret was divulged."

"What secret?"

"The mystery about the black domino."

"Well, what does it amount to?"

"She is a confidence woman—a female pick-pocket—an expert thief, and that lad is her pal."

"Now I do not believe a word of that story, for she has been weeping frequently. Confidence women do not shed tears—pick-pockets do not act like that woman."

"I shall venture no opinion, so far as I am concerned; but I mean to wait and see what is to be the result. George says that she has stolen a large sum of money, from Napoleon; and that the boy helped her do it."

"If that is true, why do they not arrest her at once?"

"They have not got sufficient proof to justify that course yet, though they think they will be able to do it very soon."

"If I live a hundred years, I never will wear another mask, or associate with others who do. I am very sure that we would have enjoyed our excursion much better, if we had not appeared in mask."

"I agree with you there—these masquerades are only suited to furnish opportunities for thieves to ply their trades."

"As soon as Ingomar finishes his story, (and I hope he will not stop a moment until he is through with it,) we will put an end to this nonsense."

"I will go and request the queen to reassemble her party at once, so that we may hear the remainder of the tale without further delay."

"I wish you would, and let it be finished without stopping for recess."

Ivanhoe then went to look for the queen, who issued her orders for the party to meet immediately. A majority of the passengers came up with Ingomar and the queen, as they were becoming deeply interested in the story. The maskers all being seated, the queen directed Ingomar to resume his story.

INGOMAR'S STORY CONTINUED.

It was greatly astonished, and very much disappointed, when Mrs. Debar returned to my cell, and informed me that the civil authorities refused to believe her, when she informed them that I was not her husband. They thought it was a ruse invented by her, to get her husband out of prison, but she was kind enough to bring a lawyer to see me on the subject. Mr. Deediddle was a middle aged man, with a very red nose and a ponderous stomach, evidently a devout worshiper of Bacchus. I don't think I ever saw such a red nose on a man's face. He was a perfect talking machine; and I was rather distrustful of him, but he assured me, that there would be no difficulty, in securing my release.

"Fact is, Mr. Demar, I'm an old hand at the pump—no cure no pay is my motto," said Mr. Deediddle, as he wiped the perspiration from his brow with a red handkerchief of enormous size. "Fact, Mr. Demar, I have walked in the legal harness for twenty years; what I don't know about I won't printed yet. Fact, Mr. Demar, never lost half a dozen cases in my life. Fact, sir, and when you get me on a HABEAS corpus, I can beat the inventor of the glorious writ. Fact, sir, that's a glorious writ. Fact, sir, it's the palladium of liberty—it's the alpha and omega of American freedom. Fact, sir, I'll prize you out of this horrible place, sir, with this great lever of the law—this center-pole of the prisoners' castle of hope. Fact is, Judge Flaxback always yields to me—he is very fond of whist, and I always let him win, then he returns the favor when making decisions. Fact, sir, he never decides against me—he always stops with me during court—he loves good wine—I always keep the very best. Fact, sir, I keep him full; but business is business, you know, Mr. Demar—no cure no pay. I believe I told you that was my motto, yes, sure enough I did; but a retainer you know is always customary—a small retainer—say fifty dollars. Fact is, Mr. Demar, business is business, you know."

I gave him fifty dollars as quick as I could, and would have given him double that sum, if he had demanded it.

"For heaven's sake, Mr. Deediddle," said I, "get me out of this miserable place, and you shall be well paid."

"Fact is, sir, you shall be out before to-morrow night. Judge Flaxback is to be in town this very day, and I'll have a HABEAS corpus served on the sheriff immediately."

I was glad when he went away, but it was but a short while before he returned, accompanied by the district court clerk, who came to administer the oath, that I had to make, in order to procure the writ. I made the oath, and again I was left alone, when bright rays of hope began to steal in on me. I laid myself down on my hard bed, and began to gaze at Lottie's picture, and my mind was so intently fixed on the dear image, that I did not hear the jailer when he opened the door.

"Thanks be to heaven, Eddie, I have found you at last," exclaimed Harry Wainwright, as he sank down by my side, and burst into tears. "Oh Eddie, kill me kill me! I am the vilest wretch, that ever disgraced the face of this green earth. I have spread misery and ruin, around all who loved me. I have broken Lottie's heart, and she is dying. Dr. Dodson says she can not live three days longer. Oh! why was I ever created? I dare not ask you to forgive me; I can only ask you to slay me. If remorse could kill, I would have been dead long ago—there is a flaming fire consuming my vitals—yet it will not kill me. Lottie will die, with a curse on her lips against me, for she believes I have murdered you, and it will be too late to undeceive her, for she is dying of a broken heart. I have killed the sweetest sister, that mortal man ever had. Eddie, I would give the world, if it was all mine, if I could recall the past—if I could only atone for the crimes that I have committed. Poor Viola has been tried and convicted, while Lottie was too ill to know anything about it. They have kept the awful news from her, but she will soon leave this wicked world, and I am determined not to survive her."

He then sunk helpless on the floor and groaned aloud. I was so shocked by the awful tidings about Lottie's condition, that I was completely paralyzed. I could only stand like a marble statue and stare at the unhappy boy, whose rashness had caused all this misery. It was heartrending to witness his sufferings. I don't think I ever saw such mortal agony endured by any one before. I felt no enmity towards him. I pitied him from the very bottom of my heart. I thought of how he had loved Viola, and how he must have suffered on her account. Then I thought of his love for Lottie, and knew that the errors he had committed, were caused by his love for his sister. As soon as I could sufficiently command my feelings to enable me to talk, I began to do what I could to console Harry.

"There is no reason why you should feel remorse at all; grief comes natural under such circumstances; remorse is the pain produced by a consciousness of guilt; guilt can not exist where there has been no wilful intent. The mistakes you have committed were errors of judgment, and not of the heart. It is the intent that constitutes the crime. You were prompted to act by love for your sister, and I feel more inclined to approve than I do to condemn you. I have always loved you, Harry—I love you yet; and if Lottie could live we would all be happy again. Rise up, I pray you, Harry; let us forget the past, and work together to repair the errors committed. I promise you that, so far as my feelings are concerned, no ill will shall ever find lodgment in my poor broken heart against you."

"Eddie," he said, "you are different from all other men. Your heart is more noble, more generous and more forgiving than others; and it is a knowledge of that fact, that makes my conscience condemn me. You ought to have cut my unworthy head off when I gave you that insulting blow. Oh! if you know how my conscience gnaws and burns me for that mean, despicable act, you would indeed pity me."

"You should not feel so about that, because you thought I had betrayed your sister, and it is a brother's duty to protect the honor of his sister. The truth is I think, under the same circumstances, I should have acted as you did. From what I have heard, Mr. Debar resembles me so much, that it requires close inspection to tell one from the other. Now, you saw Debar with his wife in Memphis, and you thought it was me. You naturally concluded that I was a hypocritical sneak, who had deceived and betrayed your sister. Believing that to be so, you determined to punish her betrayer. Harry, I admire you for it; don't ask me to forgive you, for there is nothing to be forgiven."

"Yes, Eddie, but for my rashness, coupled with my unpleasant temper, all the trouble might have been avoided. You could have explained every thing, but I did not give you a chance. There is where I committed the unpardonable error that has ruined all of us."

"I hope that things are not so bad as you seem to think. We must act now, and it must be done promptly. A dispatch must be sent to Doctor Dodson without delay; and if you will go and procure a messenger to take it to the nearest telegraph office, I will write the dispatch while you are getting the messenger ready. See that he is well mounted, on a good horse, for he must make at least eight miles per hour; it is twenty four miles from here to the nearest telegraph office. It is of the greatest importance that Lottie should be advised of my safety as soon as possible. Tell the messenger that he shall have as much money as he wants, if he will make speed. Go quick, Harry; make the necessary arrangements, while I write the dispatch."

He hurried from the jail instantly when I penned the following message:

"Doctor Dodson: Tell dear Lottie I am well and safe; will be home day after to-morrow. Harry is with me, and every thing is explained. A man, resembling me very much, killed Clanton; he was imprisoned to wait his trial—he escaped—I was arrested and detained, under a mistaken belief that I was the criminal. It is a mere mistake of personal identity. The real criminal was in Memphis. Harry saw him."

[CONTINUED ON SECOND PAGE.]

THE RIPLEY ADVERTISER.

F. FORD, Editor and Publisher.

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